CHAPTER II

An Anatomy of the Indian Police

I. Growth prior to Independence

1.1. Landmarks: A semblance of the police system as we know

it today existed even in Ancient India. But it was first

under the Mughals and later during the British rule that

what generally passed off as the Police attained a recog-

nisable form. The former could be credited with having sown

the seeds of the Village Police which, even now, is regarded

as the bedrock of all police work.[1] The British, initially

in the shape of the East India Company and subsequently as

the representatives of the Crown, improved on it measure by

measure. In this drawn-out effort, the following may right-

ly be regarded as the important landmarks:

i. the introduction (1843) in Sind of a system
   similar to the Royal Irish Constabulary;

ii. the extension (1853) of the above system to
   the Bombay Police with the appointment of a
   Superintendent of Police in every District;

iii. the appointment (1860) of a Police Commission
   which recommended the abolition of the Military
   Police and the constitution of a single homo-
   geneous civil police force;

---

[1] Sir Percival Griffith, 'To Guard my People:
The History of the Indian Police' (London,
Ernest Benn Ltd., 1971), p.14.

iv. the promulgation (1861) of the Police Act
embodying the above recommendation;

v. the formation (1902) of another Police
Commission which recommended major structural
changes at all levels and which hold good
even now;

and

vi. the setting up of the Islington (1912) and
Lee Commissions (1924) whose recommendations
led to substantial Indianization of senior
ranks in the Forces.[2]

The above Indianization was accompanied simultaneously
by the gradual increase in the strength of the subordinate
levels as well. There was substantial accretion to the
ranks arising from the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of
1921-22. Thus, a little before independence was actually
granted to India, there existed a fairly elaborate police
machinery which transmitted an ability to stand up to the
challenges of social disorder. There were no doubt a
number of shortcomings. Basically, however, a system had
been established which posterity could improve upon.

II. Growth since Independence

2.1. State Forces: A striking development in the Indian
Police since Independence (1947) is the rate at which
State police forces have expanded. This is the result

---

[2] Sir Percival Griffith, p.190.

mainly of the need to cope with a rise in population and the consequent increase in workload. Appendix I illustrates the point in respect of a few Forces in the country. The growth of the Tamil Nadu Police has been particularly phenomenal. This State would provide the main base of investigation for the present thesis because:

    i. This Researcher belongs to the Indian Police
       Service Cadre of Tamil Nadu where he has had
       substantial field experience;

                        and

    ii. Tamil Nadu is normally looked upon as one of
        the more enlightened States in the country
        from the point of view of police administration.

2.2. Central Forces: Perhaps an equally noteworthy phenomenon is the creation of a large army of para-military and similar Forces under the control of the Government at the Centre. These are the Border Security Force (82 battalions), Central Reserve Police Force (71 battalions), the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (9 battalions), Central Industrial Security Force (30 battalions) and the Railway Protection Force (8 battalions). Intelligence agencies such as the Central Intelligence Bureau and the Research and Analysis Wing (although not wholly manned by the Police) and the premier investigating body, viz., the Central Bureau of Investigation (C.B.I), are also formidably large in size.

2.3. Modernization: No account of the Government's efforts to sharpen police performance in the country is complete

without a reference to its <u>scheme for modernization</u> of Forces.
Under this, each State Police Force receives, annually, a hand-
some grant to modernize its equipment such as vehicles, wire-
less system, computer and other tools which facilitate scien-
tific investigation of crime and a systematic handling of
crisis situation. Tamil Nadu received the following grants
during the past five years and it spent the allocated money
in the manner noted against each year:

Year	Expenditure incurred (Rs.in lakhs)	How spent	
1977-78	18.54	i. Motor cycles	(34)
		ii. Jeeps	(3)
		iii. LUS Equipment for Finger Print Bureau (Phase - I)	
1978-79	24.68	i. Motor Cycles	(14)
		ii. LUS Equipment (Phase II & III)	
1979-80	-	-	
1980-81	60.32	i. Jeeps	(3)
		ii. WHF Sets	(300)
		iii. W.T. Sets	(154)
1981-83	86.82	i. W.T. Sets	(416)
		ii. Electronic Telex Exchange	
		iii. Enlarger Lens	(2)
		iv. Adapter for Microfilming	

III. The Image of the Police

3.1. The Public View: The above account of the growth of
Indian Police in the post-Independence period thus makes
impressiving reading. It rightly gives one the feeling that
the Forces are moving forward to new levels of efficiency.
This does not, however, square with the image of the Police
in the eyes of the public. Under the British, the Police
had been regarded as an instrument of oppression and a tool
to strike incalculable fear in the mind: of the common man.
Unfortunately, even after three decades of Independence, the
Police has failed to live down this image. It is still
looked upon as a body of men who are unsympathetic and un-
responsive to the lowly placed and who use third degree
methods in their day-to-day operations without ary inhibi-
tion. That this is not a sweeping statement made out of
bias could be gauged from many public opinion surveys.

3.2. Study by David Bayley: Perhaps the most significant
of such surveys was the one organized in 1965 by David Bayley
whose 'Police and Political Development in India' is an
authoritative volume on the growth and structure of the
Indian Police. Four questions in this survey attempted to
elicit the views of respondents on what they thought was
the kind of treatment people who came into contact with the
Police received. A sizeable proportion of the urban respon-
dents, particularly those from the North, believed that
police questioning was both 'rude and tricky'. Further, nearly

50% of those interviewed in a city in Uttar Pradesh, stated that the Police threatened and beat everyone they took to the Station. In the same city, 74% believed that a bribe was necessary to persuade policemen to do their duty. According to Bayley, the survey results demonstrated "forcefully what many close observers of Police-Public relations in India have long thought, namely, that the Indian public is deeply suspicious of the activities of the Police. A considerable proportion expect the Police to be rude, brutal, corrupt, sometimes in collusion with criminals and very frequently dealing unevenly with their clients."[3]

3.3. Study by Indian Institute of Public Opinion: A more recent survey (1978) was the one conducted by the Indian Institute of Public Opinion, New Delhi at the instance of the National Police Commission. To a question whether the Police in India as a profession discharged its duties in a straight-forward and impartial manner, 78% of the complainant witnesses (i.e., those who had come into contact with the Police in their capacity as a complainant) said 'no'. 86% of the non-complainant witnesses shared the same view. As regards police attitudes towards the public, nearly 50% of both categories felt that the Constabulary were threatening in their posture. Nearly 20% thought they were rude. The

---

[3] David H.Bayley, The Police & Political Development in India (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1969), p.203.

impression was somewhat less unfavourable as regards the
attitudes of higher levels. 44% of the complainant and 47%
of the non-complainant witnesses believed that corruption
was one main reason why police image in the country was
poor. Low economic and social conditions of policemen
and their lack of education were cited as other reasons why
the Police was looked down upon by society. The respondents
suggested stricter supervision (25%), better living condi-
tions (21%), better selection and training procedures (13%),
better working conditions (7%) and the recruitment of well
educated men (3%) as measures which would help to improve
police image.[4]

3.4. <u>Survey by this Researcher</u>: This Researcher conducted
an opinion survey (October 1982) among a cross-section of
the population in Tamil Nadu to assess what the public
think of police performance and conduct. Eighty per cent
of the 64 samples chosen were graduates and the rest had
only school education. They represented various professions
such as teaching, commerce, medicine, engineering, govern-
ment service, etc. Only 31% of the respondents believed
that police image in India was good. 15% were positive
that this was bad. 54% considered that it was partly good
and partly bad. 44% thought that the Police was responsive
to the needs of the common man. 31% did not share this view.
25% were uncertain of the actual position. 73% believed that

---

[4] National Police Commission (1977), <u>Study on Police
Image</u> conducted by IIPO (New Delhi, Ministry of Home
Affairs, 1979), pp.154-55.

the Police could be made more responsive by inducting into it more highly educated men and women. 11% alone opined that policemen were always impartial in the discharge of their duties. 73% stated that this was the case only some-times. Surprisingly, a few of the respondents (8%) averred that policemen were never impartial. The remaining 8% did not offer any opinion.

3.5. <u>Lessons drawn from the Surveys</u>: Surveys of the kind cited above no doubt suffer from many infirmities. Far too often the selection of samples is unscientific and their questioning rather hurried and unimaginative. Nevertheless, within permissible margins of error, they help to reinforce certain widespread impressions.

The strong feeling among many sections of the Indian populace that policemen are far from helpful and are per-petrators of misery gets strengthened by the findings of the surveys referred to in the preceding paragraphs. This is a rather dismaying situation if one considers the fact that it is more than thirty years since India got herself dis-engaged from the yoke of foreign rule. Equally relevant is the fact that the money spent on the Police has been increas-ing enormously each year without apparently a corresponding improvement in police performance.

IV. Impact of the Problems of a Modernizing Society

4.1. Background: One explanation that is normally offered
for the poor performance of the Indian policeman is that
he functions in a complex society that is still in a period
of transition from the archaic to the modern. Sociologists
look upon India as a modernizing society in which the indivi-
dual "lives an institutional life in a traditional set-up
transmitted to him by his culture and under various affi-
liations of blood-ties; family roles, kinship behaviour,
age-old conventions, ethos and valued-ideals".[5] This is
in conflict with an evident desire to alter the social
fabric on the basis of newly acquired social values. The
resultant mental confusion introduces uncertainties in an
average citizen's daily conduct. Himself coming from and
having to operate in such a social set-up, the Indian police-
man finds himself in a piquant situation.

4.2. Problems of the Economy: A few writers look upon
'Modernization' as a "process of social change in which
development is the economic component" and also as "the
twentieth century's distinctive mode of accelerating social
change by rational planning".[6] Viewed in this perspective,

---

[5] Raghuvir Sinha, Social Change in Indian Society
    (Delhi, Concept Publishing Co., 1978), p.171.

[6] International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences,
    Vol.X (1968), p.386.

India's modest progress towards the target of full econo-

mic development marks it as a society that is yet to

modernize itself totally. In spite of the well-conceived

Five-Year Plans and the many gigantic public sector projects

that have consequently come into being, the country's

economic situation is still far from satisfactory. While

the population has gone up from 36 crores in 1951 to 68

crores in 1981, the per capita income remains at an abysmal

Rs.1,163 per annum. The growth rate has also not shown

any phenomenal increase. The level of unemployment, parti-

cularly among those who are educated and even have college

degrees, is disconcertingly high. All these distressing

features of the economy have heightened urban tension and

have had an impact on the crime graph as well. From a mere

5.66 lakh cases in 1954, the crime figure went up to 13.54

lakhs during 1977. (The official figures for the subse-

quent years are still not available.) There has been a

corresponding increase in the pendency of cases in Courts,

viz.,1.9 lakhs in 1962 against 19.7 lakhs during 1975.[7]

Further, the various restrictions on the economic and finan-

cial activities of business firms and individuals (which

government has considered necessary to impose) have led to

---

[7] First Report of the National Police
Commission (1977) New Delhi, Ministry
of Home Affairs, 1979, p.11.

a new class of offenders who, because of the wealth and in-
fluence they enjoy, need dexterous handling.

4.3. <u>Growth in Literacy</u>: The process of modernization has
led to a major expansion in facilities for primary educa-
tion. This has considerably pushed up literacy among groups
of the population, particularly those living in urban areas
and adds new dimensions to police tasks. " ... the style of
police handling of public order situation has had to change
from an aggressive mailed-fist attitude to a peaceful and
persuasive handling of agitational groups."[8] The situation
calls for greater sophistication among police personnel,
particularly those at lower levels. Consequently, a major
task of the police leadership is to bring about an attitu-
dinal change among policemen traditionally known for their
ham-handedness.

4.4. <u>Allegiance to Caste and Community</u>: The contradictions
in the mental outlook of an average Indian citizen referred
to in paragraph 4.1 are in no better evidence than in his
strong sense of loyalty to his communal and caste group.
The modernizing influences that are discernible in Indian
society have not diluted the desire of every Indian to profess
open support to the clan he belongs to. While this no doubt
introduces stability to individual groups, it has worked
against bringing greater cohesion to the society as a whole.

---

[8] First Report of the National Police Commission
(1977), p.10.

Since casteism and communalism have become fashionable and
are dominant factors in the day-to-day life of almost
every Indian, tension between groups is frequent. Not a day
passes without reports of communal and caste clashes in
some part of the country or the other. Particularly dis-
maying are those that occur between Hindus and Muslims and
between Scheduled Castes and the so-called 'Upper Caste
Hindus'. The situation flowing from such exchanges is dif-
ficult to handle and requires extreme ingenuinty and the dis-
play of utmost non-partisanship by the Police. This is
difficult to achieve because policemen themselves find it
difficult to extricate themselves from the pull of communal
and caste loyalties. This inescapable factor has invited the
critical attention of many communal groups immediately follow-
ing major clashes.

4.5. Prejudices of the Political Elite: A sizeable section
of the political elite in the country are still those who
had seen the Police in action under an alien government. They,
therefore, find it difficult to erase from their minds the
memory of a perverted Force driven by a foreign power to
suppress the nationalist sentiment. This unfortunate mental
make-up of some of today's functionaries is a tremendous
handicap to policemen who, during their day-to-day working,
should be constantly conscious that their methods of work
and conduct are subject to a clinical and sometimes, biased
scrutiny.

V. Present Structure and Composition

5.1. The Hierarchy: Since Independence, the structure of the Indian Police, particularly at the District Level, has not undergone any radical change. The Police Station has remained the fundamental unit of administration. The three-tier structure recommended by the 1902 Police Commission has been basically preserved. This comprises the Constabulary, the supervisory ranks (Sub-Inspector and Inspector) and the superior officers (Deputy Superintendent and District Superintendent). There is a Deputy Inspector-General (D.I.G.) for each Range which is a group of three or four Districts. He supervises the work of District Superintendents of Police in his jurisdiction and thereby reduces the span of control of the Inspector-General (I.G). A change of some significance ushered in during the recent past is that many State Forces are headed by a Director-General (D.G) instead of by an Inspector-General. The former has now two or three functional Inspectors-General reporting to him. For instance, in Tamil Nadu, there is an I.G. for Law and Order and another for Crime and Intelligence. To facilitate easy understanding, an organisational chart of a typical State Force (Tamil Nadu) is given in Appendix II.

5.2.1. Recruitment - General Observations: In spite of the fact that a career with the Police, particularly at the level of the Constabulary, suffers from the treble short-comings of an unattractive pay structure, poor promotion

prospects and an hazardous range of duties, there has been
no major problem in getting adequate manpower. The high rate
of unemployment ensures an avalanche of applications even from
educated youth. Actually, on recruitment days, there is such
a large gathering of aspirants, that the recruiting officials
have to prepare themselves to meet large-scale confusion and
public disorder.

Literacy in the country which was 5.3% in 1901 and
which rose to 29.45% in 1971 is now 34.80% (according to
the 1981 Census). There has been a commensurate rise in the
literacy level of recruits to the police services, in the
highest, middle and lowest levels. Possibly, the pheno-
menal change in the educational background of recruits of
the Tamil Nadu Armed Police Battalions more than any other
Force amplifies the point best. Although the basic educa-
tional qualification for a recruit to the Armed Police is
still only an ability to read and write, the number of young
men with fairly high educational achievement is amazing.
Appendix III illustrates the changing scene best.

5.2.2. Recruitment of Constabulary: The Constabu-
lary who constitute nearly 95% of any State Police Force
are recruited by the District Superintendents of Police and
Commandants of the State Armed Police Battalions. Forces
under the Central Government do similar recruitment to meet
their needs.

At present, the education level prescribed for
Constable-recruits to the Unarmed Branch varies from a pass

in the VII Standard to a pass in the Higher Secondary or an equivalent examination. Kerala, Maharashtra and a few Union Territories opt for the VIII Standard. However, uniformly in all States, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates are given a relaxation. The Committee on Police Training appointed by the Government of India recommended (1973) that a pass in the Final High School Examination or its equivalent should be the minimum educational qualification for the recruitment of Constables both in the Unarmed and Armed Branches throughout the country. The Committee added that there should be a conscious effort to attract persons with an even higher educational qualification. It also favoured advance increments to those coming in with high qualifications.

5.2.3. Recruitment of Sub-Inspectors: Sub-Inspectors of Police are picked up on the basis of a State-wide selection process which has a preliminary physical efficiency test followed by an interview which is sometimes preceded by a written test. In some States, the Public Service Commission is entrusted with this task and it does this by co-opting senior serving or retired Police Officers. In others, the Force itself wholly takes care of the selection. The Central Government Forces also recruit Sub-Inspectors from time to time adopting almost the same method as State Forces.

5.2.4. Recruitment of Superior Officers: The next level of recruitment is for the ranks of Deputy Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent. The former is recruited by the

State Government on the basis of a competitive examination
held by the State Public Service Commission. In addition
to this direct recruitment from among fresh graduates, there
is a percentage of promotion to this rank from Inspectors
found suitable in terms of their seniority and performance
in the field.

An Assistant Superintendent belongs to the elitist
Indian Police Service (I.P.S). He is chosen from young
graduates of the 21-28 age group on the basis of an All India
competitive examination conducted annually by the Union Pub-
lic Service Commission. Incidentally, the results of the
same examination are utilised to select officers for the
Indian Foreign Service (I.F.S), the Indian Administrative
Service (I.A.S) and a host of other superior Services run
by the Government of India. A common selection list is
drawn up from which candidates are assigned to the different
Services on the basis of their preference, rank in the merit
list, and available vacancies each year. There is also a
scheme whereby officers belonging to the State Police Force
who have attained the rank of Superintendent of Police are
promoted to the I.P.S. against a quota of 33% of all the
posts earmarked as I.P.S. Cadre posts. This is as a measure
of incentive to State Service Officers starting in the lower
rungs so that they can reasonably aspire to rise in the
hierarchy and occupy positions of importance at least for
a short spell before they retire from service. On the face
of it, this is a laudable scheme aimed at heightening the

morale of an important segment of the Force. Unfortunately,
however, this has led to a few personnel problems in the
form of litigation between direct recruits to the I.P.S
and promotees thereto over fixation of relative seniority
and to consequent lack of harmony between the two classes.
Both the Government of India and State Governments have
been highly embarrassed by this development.

5.3. Communal Composition: Perhaps equally important is the
question what the communal composition of the various police
forces in India is. This is because, as already stated in
paragraphs 4.1 and 4.4, in spite of a facade of modernity,
Indian society is still a tradition-bound, close-knit outfit.
Bayley bemoans the fact that precious little information is
available to answer questions such as "Who are the men of
the Constabulary?", "What castes predominate?", and "What
families repeatedly send their young men to the Police?"[9].
He is struck by the reluctance of government officials, parti-
cularly IPS officers, to discuss the subject in all its detail.
He seems unconvinced by the denial of some of them that caste
ever played a part in the recruitment of Constables. "If
caste is as pervasive in its influence as is generally
accepted, can a police force operate effectively if it does
not reflect the caste composition of an area in which it must
act or is utterly heterogeneous in its caste make-up?"[10].
This Researcher shares Bayley's belief.

---

[9] Bayley, p.90.

[10] Ibid., p.92.

This Researcher collected specific data on the
communal background of policemen. Figures for the whole
country have been difficult to obtain. Hence the decision
to confine himself to Tamil Nadu Police which has an im-
pressive data bank. The communal composition of the Force
is as below:

Level	Total st-rength	Sche-duled Castes	Sche-duled Tribes	Mus-lims	Christ-ians	Others (Mostly Upper Caste Hindus)
Superior Officers (i.e., from DSP to DGP)	346	25	2	7	32	280
Middle Level (i.e., Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors)	4366	541	9	177	419	3220
Constabulary	46384	8608	425	3177	5601	28573

Taking the Force as a whole, the representation of the mino-
rity communities whose strength in the State population is
given in brackets would work out as follows:

Scheduled Castes and Tribes:	18.8%	(1.6%)
Christians ..	11.9%	(4.8%)
Muslims ..	6.6%	(4.3%)

5.4. Family Background: The family background of the members
of the Forces is of no less significance. While information
under this head is not available in respect of the entire
Tamil Nadu Police, the figures collected from representative

samples belonging to the ranks of Inspector. Sub-Inspector
and the Constabulary who took part in the survey (1981)
conducted by this Researcher at Madras are revealing. The
fathers of the 370 samples were from the following pro-
fessions:

Agriculture	..	21?
Police	..	4L
Trade	..	2?
Teaching	..	?
Armed Forces	..	?
Other Government Service	..	1?
Other professions (such as industrial workers, tailors, fishermen, masons, etc.)	..	?

The above figures would indicate that personnel
with an essentially agrarian background dominate the ranks
of the Tamil Nadu Police. Men who are already well exposed
to the Police through their policemen fathers are also size-
able in number. These incidentally, are two groups who,
more than others, have the right background for a job in
the Police which requires among other qualities, an under-
standing of the characteristics of the rural scene and a
mental make-up that is attuned right from youth to with-
standing the rigours of police routine. Discussions with
officers from Central and State police forces reveal that
their composition is not very different. When this is the
case how is it that the police personnel in India are
tarnished by the popular impression that they are a body of

cruel and dishonest individuals who are reluctant to help
the common man in distress? This question would come for
a critical analysis in the subsequent chapters.

--oo8oo--

SUMMARY

Although Ancient India is known to have had a sort
of police system, it was only under the Moghuls that some
shape was lent to the Police. The real credit for the ulti-
mate growth of the Police in this country should, however,
go to the British who first under the East India Company
and later under the Crown, brought about many innovations
which helped the Police to attain a formal structure. The
Force was manned at the higher levels essentially by Euro-
peans till the beginning of the present century when appre-
ciable Indianization took place. Since Independence, the
Police as a body has grown considerably in the States. Sig-
nificant also is the birth of a number of huge para-military
and similar Forces under the control of the Central Govern-
ment. Noteworthy again is the scheme of modernization
floated by the Government of India. Although the basic
structure of the Indian Police has been generally retained,
there is evidence of a few changes in the composition of
Forces. The literacy level of recruits has gone up a great
deal and their ethnic break-up bears better relation to
their strength in the community than before.More importantly
many of them have a rural background which is quite suited
to efficient discharge of duties in an essentially service-
oriented agency like the Police. It is, therefore,

surprising why the Police in India is yet to gain a re-
putation for efficiency and willingness to help the
common man at all costs. The image of the police forces
remains unsatisfactory as borne out by a number of
studies.

--oo§oo--